Interview with C. Douglas Dillon

Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR C. DOUGLAS DILLON

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Q: Ambassador Dillon, let's start with some comments about your background before you became ambassador to France. How did you become interested in diplomacy?

DILLON: I've been interested in diplomacy ever since my days at college—Harvard. I majored in American history and literature and wrote my honors thesis on the origin of the Spanish-American War. I specialized in the last year or two, under the guidance of Professor Phinney Baxter, later President of Williams College, in American diplomatic history. So I've had an interest right from day one. After that I did a fair amount of traveling abroad—and in either the late '30s or 1946—I can't remember just which—I became a member of the Council on Foreign Relations here in New York, and followed their work very closely. My family—my mother and father— had an apartment in Paris, and from the mid-twenties on, I used to spend some time there regularly, so I was used to that, and every summer when I was in college, I spent at least a month abroad.

Q: When were you at Harvard?

DILLON: I graduated in 1931.

Q: I see.

DILLON: That sort of started my general interest. Now, as far as this specific assignment, there's another thread running through my background. That was that I was interested in politics right from the time I got out of college. I was elected in the first year I was out, 1932, as a member of thRepublican county committee representing my township in New Jersey, which is Bedminster in Somerset County. I proceeded up the ladder in the party hierarchy, rather rapidly, because in 1934, I was vice chairman of the County Committee, which was sort of an honorary title. But the chairman, who was a house painter, and a very good one, fell off his ladder and incapacitated himself in early October, just before the gubernatorial election, so I became acting county chairman at a crucial moment and at a very young age. I learned a lot in a hurry about Republican politics— all politics. Incidentally we elected our Republican Governor in one of the closest elections in the history of New Jersey. After the war, when I came back, I was elected to the New Jersey Republican State Committee, as the representative of my county—Somerset County. I climbed up that ladder until I was vice chairman of the State Committee, and I knew the chairman very well. Then there was a third thing that drew both of these together and that was, my father had been a good friend of Foster Dulles—used him as a lawyer, I guess—Sullivan and Cromwell. And so Foster Dulles was aware of my interest in politics, and he was very interested in the Dewey campaign, and I went and helped him raise money for that in New Jersey.

Q: This was the Dewey campaign of 1944?

DILLON: No, 1940.

Q: Okay.

DILLON: That was when Willkie overwhelmed things, and I went to that convention. In 1944 I was out in the Pacific with the Navy, but then when we came back, in 1948, I also worked with Foster Dulles on the nominating campaign. When Dewey was nominated, Mr. Dulles asked me, along with a couple of other people, who I'll mention in a minute, to work

with him in preparing foreign policy speeches that Dewey might give during the campaign. He had an office in the Roosevelt Hotel, and his chief assistant in that was his brother, Allen Dulles. The next down the ladder was Christian Herter, and the next one was me, and the youngest one was McGeorge Bundy, so we had quite a group. We worked and wrote a lot of speeches for Mr. Dulles. He liked them, and he gave them to Dewey to deliver, but Dewey didn't deliver any of them because he thought they were too strong and too controversial. Dewey was also being advised by Senator Vandenberg, who felt that he should not upset the Democrats because after he was elected, he would be able to deal much better with them in the Senate if he hadn't been too strong, so he followed that advice. I worked for two months there very closely, every day with Foster Dulles. So he knew me and my interests and what he thought of my capacity, I guess, in this area. So then we come to 1952, when I was a strong supporter of Eisenhower in general, and of General Eisenhower's candidacy for the Republican nomination.

Q: Let me interrupt you a moment, will you?

DILLON: Yes.

Q: Did you do anything related to foreign affairs between '48 an'52?

DILLON: No jobs, but I began traveling abroad every year, particularly in France. Besides the apartment in Paris, my father had bought, in 1935, a vineyard in Bordeaux— Chateau Haut-Brion— and we had been active in managing and running that, and I went back and forth to understand that and work with it. I had a cousin who had served with the French Army as a very young man in the beginning of World War I, then transferred to the American Army, and he later married a French girl, and he ran this place for us. But I had no job related to foreign affairs. So then in 1952, when I was interested in Eisenhower's campaign, there was a complicated situation in New Jersey. The governor of the State, a man by the name of Alfred Driscoll, wanted to be Vice President. He wanted an unpledged delegation, that he could control, and he had the support of the top party organization.

There was a Taft group that was going to run against him in the primary. and I got together with another younger fellow out there who was a state senator from Somerset County, by the name of Malcolm Forbes, who is now the publisher of Forbes Magazine. He was very interested in politics in those days, and we organized a campaign for Eisenhower in the primary. We went around and got a lot of young people— that was for free— to take petitions around and get them signed in supermarkets, and we got something like a couple of hundred thousand signatures, and Malcolm Forbes took them over to give to Eisenhower to persuade him to run. We got one of the congressmen from New Jersey, Clifford Case, who later became Senator, to break away from the governor and join us. It seemed likely when it came to early March, near the final day for filing slates to run in the primary, that an Eisenhower slate might well have won the primary, which was to be held in late May or early June. That would have been a terrible blow to the governor, and so, on the day before—two days before— the final day for filing, the Governor came out for Eisenhower. He offered us two slots on the delegation, one as a regular delegate and one as the first alternate and Malcolm Forbes was the regular delegate. One of the regular members of the delegation got sick and could not go, so I went to Chicago as a full delegate to the nominating convention. We also spent our summers for many years in Maine, and it so happened that the chairman of the Republican Party in Maine came from Rockland, which is right near where we were on the coast. I knew him as a lawyer, and through that I was able to get the Maine delegation for Eisenhower. So I'd done some political things, just fitting in, and after the nomination that was the end. I didn't think anything was going to happen.

Q: You didn't do anything for the campaign in the fall?

DILLON: Raised money, but nothing else, no.

Q: You weren't a speechwriter as you were in '48?

DILLON: No, because Eisenhower did not call on Dulles, the way Dewey had. Dulles had nothing directly to do with the campaign—although Eisenhower knew he was very good. After Eisenhower was elected, very early on, he turned to Dulles and asked him to be Secretary of State. That was in mid-November. I think it was early December when I got a telephone call from Mr. Dulles, who was working at the Commodore Hotel. I went there and had lunch with him, and he asked me if I would be interested in being ambassador to France. He told me at that time— that the President-elect had, in effect, given him the right to nominate— to suggest— one person for one of the major embassies. The President had reserved for himself the other two or three major posts. Foster Dulles was always particularly interested in France, because he had studied there as a youth, and his wife had been there, and they had gotten together there, and he had a real understanding and love of France. So he was interested in that, and he thought I could do the job. This was a surprise for me because I was so young for that— at that time I was 42 years old. He did say that there was one problem— that it was very delicate— it was a major thing that was very close to this heart, and that was the European Defense Community— the EDC. He was going to appoint David Bruce, who had been in Paris before as ambassador, to head a special mission which would be located in Paris, but would be assigned the whole of Europe, the members of the Coal and Steel Community. Its primary and really sole purpose would be to try and help with ratification of the EDC in all the European countries. So, that was how I came to get my first assignment.

Q: And this came as a surprise, you say?

DILLON: Yes, because I hadn't asked, hadn't expected anything like that. When he did call me, I thought that he wanted to talk to me about something, but I didn't think it would be anything like that. I thought it might be a special job within the State Department or something of that nature, which would not be surprising, but this thing was quite a surprise.

Q: Was there anything that happened while you were being confirmethat was noteworthy, or was that a pro forma process?

DILLON: Well, except for one thing—it was very pro forma.

Q: Did you testify before the Foreign Relations Committee?

DILLON: Yes, I did. There were two things that may be of some interest. One was that at the convention the governor of New Jersey still tried to play all sides against the middle— he has very close to Taft, and he established some relations with him, and so the Eisenhower people were not very pleased with the governor. And so when this appointment came up, they neglected to tell the governor that I was going to be nominated, and like all things, it was leaked in the press before it was announced. At the end of December it was in a column by Joe Alsop, who was an old friend of mine in boarding school and college. I hadn't seen much of him since then— but he got this story from somewhere and wrote a column about it. The governor blew up because he hadn't been properly taken care of, but nobody paid much attention to that. The confirmation proceeding was more or less pro forma. I found it interesting, because I got up there and was put in a little anteroom next to the room where the Foreign Relations Committee met.

Q: Was this in January?

DILLON: It was announced in January; this must have been— maybe the end of January or early February, something like that. I found a very good looking and attractive lady there, surrounded by all sorts of photographers. It turned out to be Clare Luce, who was also waiting to be confirmed, so no one was terribly interested in me. They wanted to take our picture together— they got a sofa and we were sitting properly on the sofa. She said “that's not the way to sit— you've got to put your knees across like this, otherwise nothing will show in the picture but your legs!” So, I got my first indoctrination on how to behave in front of the camera from Clare Luce. And she went in and came out in two minutes flat,

everything was fine, then I went in. I can't really remember what happened, I had one really good friend on the Foreign Relations Committee, whom we'd known— not closely, but we visited back and forth - Senator Fulbright, who was not the chairman then; he was a young fellow. He was a very good friend. Anyway, I was confirmed, and studied diligently in Washington to get more caught up on the details of the French political situation.

Q: Tell me a little bit about that, the preparations for this.

DILLON: Well, there were just a lot of briefing papers at that time, there was nothing very detailed, just briefing papers, and we did have evenings with the Bruces who were at their Washington house, and they tried to tell us, including my wife, about problems and about what we could expect in Paris. It was about this time that my wife started to study French. She wasn't very good in French. I could read French: I could understand it when it was spoken to me by one person speaking directly to me but I was very rusty in speaking it myself. I had an accent, but I could get along. So I didn't have to do much special studying at first, I did what I could. We took a fellow with us when we went across on the boat. We went on the America—the last time we went on a ship, and we took lessons every day for a week. We got to Paris about the 10th of March.

Q: I see. Tell me about your relations with the rest of the Embassstaff. Did your know them before? How did you work with them?

DILLON: I knew a fellow before who was there— he left shortly afterwards. He as the CIA station chief, a fellow by the name of Robert Thayer. I didn't know any of the others. A whole group of them came up to Cherbourg or Le Havre, I've forgotten which. They had a special car on the train, and we all rode back together. That's where I first met them— it was very pleasant and very nice. The deputy chief of mission had been there a brief time, four or five months, I think, to be ready for the turnover, which they knew would take place whether a Republican or Democrat was elected, because there was an interim appointee serving. That turned out to be, from my point of view, quite helpful.

My immediate predecessor was a very eminent professional Foreign Service Officer. He was quite put out at being sent to Paris on an interim basis like this, and he let everybody know it, including the French. So they were glad to have me come as a person who was really interested. That was Ambassador James Dunn, who had been a very successful ambassador in Italy, which he loved. When David Bruce was called back in February of '52 to be Under Secretary of State, he had been pulled out of Italy and sent to Paris, which he didn't like at all.

Q: I see.

DILLON: He brought up his Italian residential staff, and even some Italian wines. After Paris he went to Spain, which he liked, and did very well.

Q: Who was the deputy that you spoke of?

DILLON: The deputy was a fellow named Theodore Achilles. He did very well there, and later—he left during my final year— he was ambassador to Peru. He was active for a long time since then— he was a very fine Foreign Service Officer and he did very well.

Q: Tell me how you organized your days in the early days.

DILLON: In the early days I found, right away, that nothing started very early. We found a girl who was sort of a failed actress of the Com#die Fran#aise, a very good, intellectual, single woman who spoke beautiful French. She came to the house every morning, and I would take half an hour with her reading the French newspapers and talking about them in French with her, which helped my accent and my vocabulary.

Q: And that time was this?

DILLON: About 9:00 or 9:30, and then after that she would take on my wife. I would get things together and go down to the office, and get to work about quarter to 10 or 10.

Q: Was your residence in the same building as the Chancery Office?

DILLON: Oh, no, it was a long way, well not a long way, it was about a 10 minute drive. The residence at that time was a building at No. 2, avenue d'Iena, which was just across the Seine from the Eiffel Tower, and the Chancery, of course, was on the Place de la Concorde. I would come down and read the cable traffic, which was the first thing I did—both incoming and outgoing. The procedure was, that all outgoing cables were signed by the ambassador though he doesn't usually see them. In a big embassy like Paris there would be a large stock of cables every day. Unless they were important they wouldn't get to the ambassador before going out. All the important political messages, and very important economic ones did get to me in advance, but they were a small part of the overall traffic. After I would finish with the cable traffic, I would probably meet for a few minutes with the Deputy Chief of Mission, whose office was nearby, and see what was up, and we just took it from there. It was a kind of a new life for me, because I'd been more on my own before, but here I found that there were lots of things to do that were representational. I had to go and be present at the laying of a wreath, or the opening of this or that, so generally I was very busy. The other thing that changed was that the French at the Quai d'Orsay worked late, and if I had to go to see them, which I did quite frequently, my appointment would generally be for something like seven o'clock in the evening.

Q: There are even references in the Foreign Relations volumes that have been published of your meeting with people in their apartments as late as 10 and 11.

DILLON: That was really special, I guess!

Q: You met with Mendes-France at 10 at night during EDC ?

DILLON: But I do remember that just as a standard thing, that after I'd come back, I'd dictate my cable report to Washington on what happened, and I'd get home about 8:00

—8:15. Dinner in France was never before 8:30, and sometimes you'd be a little late. There was a slack period of a couple of hours at lunchtime. If I did not have something special, I generally went home for lunch, and had lunch with my wife, and that would take an hour and a half to rest and eat something, because nothing happened, everything sort of stopped. But then the French continued, just normal, without anything special, until 8:00 PM. The entire Embassy didn't stay that late but my part of it did, because the people there, my immediate staff, had to do the same thing I did.

One of the things that made my job interesting, particularly in those years, was that for one reason or another, the State Department at that time, probably on account of Secretary Dulles, with his interest and knowledge where French statesmen were concerned, such as Bidault, liked to carry on the major relationship— through the American Embassy in Paris, rather than through the French Embassy in Washington. Now, that changed later, and they now do most of it through the French Embassy in Washington - where the State Department - where the Assistant Secretary who'd be handling matters could talk directly to the ambassador, and say himself what he wanted to say. But during my time, for one reason or another, they handled it more the other way, so we had more to do. When they handle matters in Washington, the Assistant Secretary or the Secretary if he's doing it, could talk directly to the ambassador and know what he said but he has no way of knowing what the ambassador reports to the Quai d'Orsay. If you do it the other way they can't know exactly what I said, but I have to report what I said, so they have a pretty good idea, and they know exactly what the top fellow in France, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was told and what he said, verbatim. They happened to like it that way, and followed that procedure during the four years that I was there.

Q: Describe what would happen when the Secretary of State or a high American delegation would come to France. How would that change the routine of the Embassy?

DILLON: Well, the only high delegation or person who ever came when I was there was the Secretary of State. The President went to Geneva but didn't come to Paris. It wasn't

like it is now, when they have so many special envoys, and of course in those days, they didn't have jet planes, so it took much longer to go back and forth. Communications just weren't as rapid. When the Secretary of State came, he stayed with me in the residence, and he had his assistant there, and everything revolved around him, because he was there for a purpose, which usually was for a NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] meeting. Or like the time he was trying to deal with Suez, it just revolved around him and around that meeting, and so the bilateral things with France were put on hold unless they had some special thing that had to be done, other than just attend meetings. We would put all our facilities at the Secretary's disposal, it would take two, three, four days before he completed his work and left Paris.

Q: Let's talk about the substantive issues of your time in France and if that you can reflect on some of the personalities. In reading the record the first thing that came up was the French intense interest in the Rosenberg case. The Rosenbergs were set to be executed and were executed in June of 1953, just a few months after you arrived. How did that affect your work, and what did you do with that?

DILLON: Well, it didn't affect my work. It was not a very pleasant experience, because, as it was coming up to the time that they were to be executed, the communists and their supporters stirred up a tremendous amount of excitement over there. I don't think it was probably a very popular thing anywhere, but certainly not among the intellectuals in France. At the actual time of the executions, there as a tremendous sort of a riot, I guess you'd call it —demonstrations, maybe, that's a better word— in the Place de la Concorde, and the French had to turn out all sorts of police of different types. It was like a battlefield. They advised me to not be there. We went out to the country, and they sent someone with us to be at the house— some security people— for a couple of days, and nothing ever happened out there.

Q: Who actually advised you —the Foreign Ministry?

DILLON: I think it was either that or the Ministry of Justice; that as it was going to be a difficult thing, it would be just as good not to be around. There as a certain amount of rock throwing, and what-else throwing, and there were about 10 or 15 police that were injured and in the hospital. I remember when I came in the next week, I went to the hospital, and thanked them, and some French police officials there liked that very much, and we never had any trouble after that. It didn't drag on. I don't recall anything much after the big initial demonstration.

Q: Did the French government officially want the American governmennot to execute the Rosenbergs?

DILLON: No, nothing from the French government officially over that.

Q: There are some letters from you in foreign relations of thUnited States, saying how much of a problem it was causing in France.

DILLON: Well, it was, at the time. It was in all the papers, and everything like that. Of course, looking at these letters that have been published now, you're way ahead of me—because I haven't seen them!

Q: Well, as you say, maybe you didn't write them.

DILLON: Well, no...

Q: They were signed by you.

DILLON: Well, I did—I think so— anything that's serious. There's one very interesting thing that I found out that's probably appropriate to say here which developed quite often, during my spell there. The Embassy staff in Paris felt differently from the Bureau of European Affairs [EUR] of the State Department. There were a number of people in EUR who were basically rather unfriendly to France and things French, and liked— were very taken with

— the Germans. That was the period when McCloy had just left and Conant had just gone there, and Germany had just come on with Adenauer, as the big wonderful place. EUR still remembered the French from the Vichy days, as a lot of them had served there, and they were not friendly at all, so we often had differences of opinion. When the time came to send a telegram back that differed with the view of the State Department, (as indicated by) the telegrams we'd received, Achilles or my people from the political department, which was headed by a man named Bob Joyce, who was also very good, always would come to me for approval of their reply. They would come and say— "this is what we feel, and we want to write a telegram, but would you please send it under your name?" What they meant by that was to send it personally— you would write in the telegram, "I." The use of the word "I" always meant it came from the ambassador personally. If there was a "we" in it, it came from the Embassy over the ambassador's signature: "we think this," "we do this," "we do that,"— that was a sort of code way of doing it. They wanted me to say "I" because they wanted to protect their own hides, back in Washington, because where they went for their next post depended on what the people in Washington thought of them. If they could blame an ambassador for telling the State Department to go to hell, that was all right, so many times they would ask me to do it in this way. I was glad to. It was just a sort of protection for the staff that made me aware of the advantages of a non-career, politically-appointed ambassador. When you get that sort of a relationship between career people on an Embassy staff and the Department, they are often scared to say what they really think, if the people in Washington don't like it. And so it was an advantage to be a political appointee. There may be some disadvantages, too, but this was a very real advantage, and we made full use of it.

There was another thing that I would do. Secretary Dulles, as I have said earlier, was very interested in France and had a very good understanding of some of the French political figures. Sometimes I would get a directive from Washington to do something. The Embassy should tell the French this or that, something that we did not agree with. I would in those cases, send back to Washington a telegram addressed to the Secretary.

That would say “eyes only—Secretary,” but that didn't mean only him. It went to about 20 people in the department, but not to 200. But I would say in it: “re: Your so and so,” which was the one that we had received from the Bureau of European Affairs— I don't agree for this reason or that. I don't intend to carry out the order unless you specifically tell me to.” That happened three or four times, maybe five or six times, and I don't think he ever told me to carry out the original directive.

Q: Can you recall some examples?

DILLON: It's hard, but it was usually— probably having to do with the EDC. We, the Embassy staff and I, had a running disagreement, from the time I got there until the final National Assembly vote, with the Bruce Mission on our appreciation of the prospects for EDC in France.

Q: Why don't we talk about that for a while.

DILLON: And, so we were constantly getting these: “can't you do this?” or “can't you do that?” and we'd say “No, we can't do this, it would be counterproductive.”Q: What did the Embassy try to do regarding EDC?

DILLON: What we tried to do was to carry out American policy, which was to favor the enactment of it. But very early on, we decided that, after checking with all the people— we had much broader contacts in France than the Bruce mission did; they were talking primarily to the Monnet-type people, who were very interested in EDC and they took their evaluation at face value. We had much broader contacts, and we came rather quickly to the conclusion that the EDC would never be ratified in the French Assembly. So we were always trying to advise Washington to prepare a fall back or at least to have a thought out position for when that happened. It turned out at the end that we were right, and that the French, when they did turn it down, wanted immediately to make amends and be friendly, and that's when Mendes-France said they would join the Common Market, and

they relaxed the objections they had to German rearmament and German admission to NATO, and so forth.

Q: What was your opinion of the way Mendes-France behaved in thaEDC controversy?

DILLON: I think it was perfectly all right because he did just whawe knew was going to happen.

Q: I see.

DILLON: When I'd been in Paris about two or three months, and I'd met all sorts of people and people from different parties, I said to Achilles and the people in our political division that I wanted to meet General de Gaulle. He replied: “That would be a good idea but it just hasn't been done— the American ambassador just doesn't talk to General de Gaulle.” And I said: “How come?” “Well, he said,” “ever since Ambassador Caffery, who had a fight with him, no American ambassador has had any connection with General de Gaulle.” So I asked him how we could get in touch with him, and he said, “We don't know. But we think that the station chief here might, because they have some contacts with him that might help.” So, I got over the local head of the CIA, who was a different person from the man who was there at the time when I arrived a couple of months before.

The new station chief happened to be a man I had known since my college days, a fellow New Yorker, a fellow by the name of James Hunt. So I said, “I want to meet de Gaulle,” and he said, “Sure! That would be wonderful— that's just right. We have good friends on his staff, that we talk to all the time.” So they arranged that the next time de Gaulle came to Paris I would meet de Gaulle. The reason why the American ambassador had no contact was that Caffery had insisted that, after de Gaulle resigned and was out as prime minister or whatever he had been after the war, if they were to see each other, it was up to de Gaulle to come and call on the American ambassador at his Chancery; and de Gaulle said “No, if the American ambassador wants to see me, he comes to see me.” And so that was a total break, and it had continued ever since. I thought that was nonsense

and said, “Well, I'll go see him.” So I went up and saw him during the summer of '53, at the Hotel La Perouse, and met in his small sitting room. He gave me a time about 9:00 at night, so I went after a light supper and we talked until about 10:30 or 11:00. He was very interested. He liked the opportunity to talk very much; he wanted to explain; and he talked about the war and how he'd been a great burden to President Roosevelt. He said that he felt very badly about that because Roosevelt was carrying all the burdens of the world on his shoulder, but he, de Gaulle, was responsible for France, and he had to think of France first, and let Roosevelt think about the world. And that made some difficulties, and he said he felt Roosevelt was a great fellow.

We talked about what was going to happen in the future of France, and he was rather glum about it, because the French were feeling pretty terrible at that time, and he had no idea then that he'd ever come back! We had a very nice talk and I said I'd like to keep in touch with him, and would he permit me to see him when he came to Paris, which was about every six months, and he said certainly. At these times we only talked for about 20 minutes, because it was usually just general conversation.So we started a relationship then, and then the Embassy staff people expanded their relationship with the Gaullist representatives in the Assembly and the Senate. —Senator Debr# is the one I think of. We had a pretty good relationship there, and we knew what they were thinking, and what they felt, and we knew where they were going. That was one of the main reason for our thinking on EDC— we felt that with the combination of the Gaullists on the right and the communists on the left, there could be not be a majority for the EDC. I also had a very good friend in France who went back to Haut-Brion days, and that was the mayor of Bordeaux, Chaban-Delmas. During that period he was a member of the Gaullist party and was Deputy. Later he headed the government a couple of times and also served as Minister of Defense and as Minister of State. We always talked very frankly, because I'd known him in Bordeaux, and he liked me and liked Americans and so often— well, not too often, but maybe twice a year - he would come and have lunch with me at the Residence, or we would have supper with him and his wife, which was unusual with French people. So

I had a very close relationship with him and he has a very knowledgeable and important member of the Assembly.

One other thing, also, which I think is interesting: from day one, when I got to Paris, and I went to call on people at the Quai d'Orsay, or any other ministry, I never took a note-taker or an interpreter with me. I was always on my own.

Q: Did you then write up your recollections immediately afterwards?

DILLON: Yes, which made me very busy. It had an advantage. In the beginning my French wasn't all that brilliant, but in the Quai d'Orsay, most of the people there understood enough English, so that if I had difficulty I could say what I wanted in English and they could understand it. I could understand their French, so we had perfect communication. But the advantage of that, I think, was very great, since I didn't have a note-taker, then they didn't— maybe they felt that just wasn't cricket. I don't know if they would do that now, but that was the way it was then. I'd see Bidault and it would be one-on-one, and he'd tell me things he never would have said if he'd had his own note-taker with him and certainly not if I'd have had mine. I think that was very helpful in developing a good and useful relationship.

Q: Getting back to the question of German rearmament. After EDC was defeated, the French had a very close vote on allowing German accession to NATO. Did you have any role in that?

DILLON: Well, we were very strong for it, because of the fact that the turning down of the EDC made this essential. And, it was, we did whatever we could. They knew we felt very strongly about it, at least the leaders. Most of them felt we were right.

Q: There's some evidence in the written record of your thanking Secretary of State Dulles for not commenting on it, immediately before. Had you told him before, to lie low?

DILLON: Well, the French, as one knows, don't like to be told what to do, most people don't. The French react a little more violently to someone telling them publicly what to do, and they're perfectly capable of, even if they want to do something, changing it and doing the opposite if someone tries to tell them what they should do. So I think that probably figures in with that, and I think that Dulles understood that about the French, so if I mentioned that to him, he would have understood. I don't remember that particular thing now, but it sounds reasonable. He would have recognized that. From the United States domestic political point of view it might have been a good thing to tell the French what to do, to show you were doing your job, that you were doing something, but in getting the task done, it was more important to lie low.

Q: The other big issue of the first year you were there, of course, was Vietnam. In 1953/54 came the climax of the French war in Vietnam. What was your role and the Embassy's role in American aid to Vietnam and American participation in the Geneva conference?

DILLON: Not much on the Geneva conference. We hadn't really any role. I think the main thing, where we came in, was telling the French that we wouldn't do some of the things they wanted us to do. The thing I particularly remember is Dien Bien Phu. The French had an idea, that, if we wanted to, we could send half a dozen B-52's from Clark Field, and in one day - one night - they could destroy the encircling Vietnamese forces and the siege would be over. And, of course, I don't know - we hadn't had much experience then, but we've seen pretty clearly since then, that it doesn't work that way. They did ask for help, and we did tell them no. Eisenhower decided not to do it, I guess partly because he thought it would be ineffective.

Q: Did you remember, in the Embassy's view, whether that was thright thing to do, or did that make it more difficult?

DILLON: Well, it made it more difficult for us, but we had no particular military expertise. We did talk to the military people about NATO things, but I don't recall ever asking them

about Indochina. We just reported the French requests to Washington, and got the answers and reported then to the French. What I recall most vividly about Dien Bien Phu was the French reaction afterward. Particularly with the more conservative people, there were people that wouldn't talk to us. It was at times unpleasant. It didn't last too long, but for awhile, you'd go to dinner and get in an elevator to go to some apartment, and other people in the elevator would turn their back!

Q: How long did that last?

DILLON: Well, I remember that one occasioThat was two days after Dien Bien Phu. I think we felt it for a month or so, and then it died down, but it was very strong, particularly in the more conservative area, with ones who had Army connections, something of that nature. The French felt it very deeply. There were many in France who felt that they had been let down, that we'd had it in our power to very easily prevent this humiliating occurrence. It was just that France felt terribly humiliated.

Q: And what about the Geneva Conference?

DILLON: We didn't have any, as I remember, input in that. I don't even remember anyone at the Embassy being there except possibly someone from the political section.

Q: There's a reference in the documents to your being recommended as an advisor to the Conference, but it doesn't indicate that you were there.

DILLON: No, I didn't go for some reason.

Q: Do you recall being recommended as a member?

DILLON: No, maybe it was in Washington.

Q: Yes, it is in Washington.

DILLON: Yes, because it would seem natural, but for some reason wasn't asked.

Q: After Geneva, or course, the United States supported the government of Diem, while the French, for a while were still supportive of the Emperor Bao Dai. Did the Embassy in Paris take part in those discussions?

DILLON: I'm sure they did, but not on a very high level. We had an extraordinary Embassy staff, particularly in the political section— Robert Joyce was the head of it. The number-two fellow in the political section was a man by the name of Bob McBride, who had been in Morocco, but he eventually wound up as our ambassador to Mexico, and did a very good job. And we had another fellow by the name of Martin Herz, who was more of a specialist in labor, but also in the Far East. He later served in an important capacity in one of the Indochina countries and ended as ambassador to Bulgaria. There was another one, Mac Godley, who was ambassador to the Congo and later in Indochina, these were all junior career officers who later rose to top. They made a very capable staff. They had relations with their opposite members, which would be like the head of the Asian Affairs section at the Quai d'Orsay. I, personally only met with the foreign minister or deputy foreign minister and maybe once or twice, with the director general of the foreign office, that was all. I didn't have relations at the lower level.

Q: So you were not a participant in any of these discussion abouDiem or Bao Dai?

DILLON: No. I do remember that they went on, but I wasn't directly involved, I remember seeing cables about them. I didn't feel strongly about it myself because I didn't know anything about it.

Q: I see. Maybe we'll talk about this a little later when you were Under Secretary, because there's also some evidence from the documentation, especially with the background you had in economics, of leaning on the Diem government in '59 and '60, to enact some

reforms. I wonder if, at that time, could you recall the arguments between the United States and France over Diem?

DILLON: No, I didn't.

Q: Why don't we talk about Suez now, because that was the next big episode of Franco-American dispute. When did you learn of what was happening with the French and Israel?

DILLON: Well, I'd learned ahead of time, because Chaban-Delmas, who was in the government then— I don't know just what his position was— came and had lunch with me at the Embassy residence, and told me that this was a very serious situation.

Q: Do you know about when that was?

DILLON: That was, I would say, about the 20th of October, somethinlike that. It was about 10 days or two weeks before our elections.

Q: Yes. The invasion was on the 29th.

DILLON: Yes, if the invasion was on the 29th, it was probably a week before. And he told me that there as going to be an attack if President Eisenhower didn't come out strongly and force Nasser to do whatever it was they wanted at the time. I don't remember exactly what the details were that we were supposed to do, but the effect was to adopt the Anglo-French position rather than the position we had had. He didn't say who would make the attack first, but did say that there was going to be a joint operation with the English.

Q: But if it was going to be with the British, he did not mentiothe Israeli connection?

DILLON: I don't recall, I am quite sure he did not. He did mention the British, he might have mentioned the Israelis, but I don't really recall that— if so, it would be in the telegram regarding our meeting. But, this was not going to take place until after the election. And it would take place within two or three days after the election. unless the President,

immediately after the election, did what they wanted, made the sort of statement about Egypt that they wanted. So I felt this was something that had to be reported back, on a very private basis. So I sent a telegram, reporting it in detail, to Secretary Dulles through the back channel, which was the CIA channel, and just for him and Allen Dulles. He took it seriously, but not entirely seriously, because Chaban-Delmas was not the head of the government, just a part of it. The action which the government of the United States took as a result of my report was to instruct Ambassador Aldrich to go and see Eden, and ask him directly if any military action was being planned.

Q: Yes.

DILLON: And, of course, the British said “nothing.” So then our government had the French saying “yes,” the British saying “no,” and having been closer, being good friends, they believed the British. That was one reason for the very violent reaction against the British on Dulles' part. But, we did have that one warning which should have prepared us a little more, but I don't think it did.

Q: Did you tell anyone else at the time— beside Mr. Dulles—wathere anyone else in the Embassy, who knew?

DILLON: I'm not sure. I think I probably must have told Achilles, since I always told him everything. I think I would have, and of course I told the CIA station chief there, Jimmy Hunt, who sent the telegram for me, but no more than that.

No one else in the whole Embassy political staff knew; and the same thing in Washington. It would not have circulated in the State Department, except to people Dulles may have personally asked to look at it. He may have shown it to others, but I just don't know. So we did have that advance notice. The next big difference came after it was all over were, when the British were still maintaining that they'd gone in there to separate the Israelis from the Egyptians. In two days, I guess, after it was over, Pineau, then Foreign Minister of France, called me to the Quai d'Orsay and told me the whole story of the French-British

operation. So I reported that back home. That could be reported by regular channel. And that made the Department eight times as mad at the British, because the British were still saying “no” and not telling us the truth.

Q: Were you aware at the time of the meeting at S#vres with Ben-Gurion? You learned about it when it became public, with everyone else?

DILLON: Yes. that is when I learned. Well, and also the British coming back and forth. The top British government people were meeting with the French, and I wasn't aware of those meetings at all. You got the feeling that something was going on, maybe, but the only real thing was when Chaban-Delmas spoke to me. I never have found out whether he gave me a wrong date on purpose to put us off, thinking we'd find out about it, or whether the date was changed, or whether he didn't know the date.

Q: He may have not known the date, and also.....

DILLON: Well, one of those three things.

Q: The French and British coordination, militarily, apparently was very bad before the war. They were supposed to go in some days after the Israelis went in, but they kept changing their plans. He either didn't know, or was aware of a different plan.

DILLON: I think that probably was what it was. The next thing of interest in the Suez operation was, that while this was going on, when they were in there, moving ahead, I got a call from Mollet, the Prime Minister, from his office, “would I come over right away?” It was about midnight, I guess, maybe later, one o'clock in the morning, when I got there. They had the whole French cabinet in the room, and I was in a sort of reception room outside it, and the prime minister's office was on the other side of the reception room. Mollet came out of the cabinet meeting and showed me a tickertape. It was a Tass announcement that they would use rockets on the British and the French if they didn't behave. It was very threatening and the French took it pretty seriously. They were in

contact by phone with the British government, and Mollet asked me “What about the United States government, what would you do, if this happens?” And I said, “Of course, that violates the NATO treaty, we'd be at your side.” But he said” “Can you get someone in Washington to confirm that right away?, because Washington has been very unfriendly”. And I said: “No, I don't see how I can.”I don't remember what the time difference was, it was eight or nine o'clock at night in Washington, and there was no way I could see that I could get someone in any quick time in Washington to answer a thing like that. So I said: “We always live up to our treaty obligation, and here it is”. Mollet went back in to talk some more to the cabinet members. Then there was a phone call for Mollet. He took the telephone in this anteroom where I was sitting. There were just the two of us there, and he was talking to Eden in London and arguing with him. Eden told him he had decided to stop the operation, and Mollet didn't want him to stop. But the British were in command and Eden said they'd made the decision they were going to stop. Mollet was very discouraged, and I asked him “Where are your forces?” and he said “They're down here almost all the way to (naming some big town) right down in the middle of the Canal. They are just entering that town, Ismailia, or something like that”. And I recall very well that in the next day or two we found that the British-French forces weren't within 25 miles of where they thought they were. It was the fog of war, I guess, and the lack of communications, they were just nowhere near there, which has always impressed me a great deal. It seems, since the British shared the same information, that Eden was making his decisions on information that was totally wrong.

Q: Yes. What about the aftermath of Suez? How did that affecU.S.-French relations?

DILLON: Well, I was quite active in it. It was upsetting. As you know, the United States put on an embargo on oil, and it was getting cold at that time of year in France. The oil embargo hit very hard, because there was no fuel and no coal. There was no heat in the Quai d'Orsay. In the foreign minister's office there was a little electric heater, right by his chair like that, so he could get a little warmer, wearing a coat or something like that to keep warm. It was really quite, quite difficult. You'd wear a coat in your office, and it was no fun

at all. The French were feeling great resentment. They told us that they'd come clean on this thing immediately, but said we've agreed to get out and we're on our way, but we can't do it overnight. There were just wild to get these damn people off the beach and stop this embargo.

Unfortunately, at the time, Secretary Dulles had taken to his bed for his first cancer operation, and so he was not functioning. The State Department was being run by Herbert Hoover, Jr., and I don't think he had the same judgment.

They were very tough on this and we were urging them to drop this embargo and they wouldn't. Finally I sent a telegram asking if I could come back and see the President, because I thought it was so important. I got word back that yes, the President would see me in Augusta, so I got on a plane and flew back. When I landed in New York and picked up the paper, I found that the embargo was over! I don't know if my coming back had something to do with it, but I've always felt it did. But anyway, I talked to Eisenhower about a number of things, nothing unusual about that, but it was the first time I'd had a one-to-one meeting with him, so it was quite daunting.

Q: Did you bring someone with you to that?

DILLON: No. At that time we had a new Deputy Chief of Mission who was getting ready for the next ambassador— that's a good habit they have on replacing the DCM six months or so before the arrival of a new political appointee. This fellow was Charlie Yost. I was debriefed when I was in Washington for a little while, and someone from the State Department came around and said: “Would you go on a radio talk show about France and the U.S., and say what's happening?” I said “Do I have to”?” and he said it would be good, so I went on the talk show. The questioner asked me there whether the French and the British were pressed into stopping because of the opinion of mankind, or if they were frightened in some way because of the Russians. I said “It's quite clear to me from the conversation with Mollet the night the operation was stopped that they were scared by the

official Tass report threatening the use of rockets. They never showed much interest in the opinion of mankind." That was the fact of the matter. I went back to France, and at that time, Mr. Dulles was recovered somewhat, enough to come over. He came over for the December meeting of NATO. The first day he got there, the very next morning in the Paris Herald, there was the headline on front page "Ambassador Dillon Says Suez Was Ended Because of the Russian Threats," not because of the American pressure in the UN. Oh! was he mad. I'd never had anyone quite so mad at me in my life!

Q: What did he say?

DILLON: He said, "Ah, why did you talk like that?" I had no excuse. I shouldn't have said this; it was the truth, but I shouldn't have said the truth. At times, it's best not to talk to the media but just say you don't know anything— I learned that later, but that was my first lesson, and a very rough one.

We always used to have dinner for the Secretary when he was there, at the Embassy, and we'd toast the different people, and he would say "thank you" to the ambassador, but this time when we had the dinner he never mentioned me or thanked us. It was terrible and most embarrassing for everyone at the dinner. But it didn't last very long— I don't know, it was maybe 10 days to two weeks later— I got a telegram from Secretary Dulles asking me if I'd come to Washington to run the economic side of the State Department.

Q: Let's talk about that in a little bit, but I want to talk about Algeria, and then maybe some overall impressions of your career in France. The Algerian War began in '54. What was the Embassy's role in reporting, and your reaction to it?

DILLON: We reported on it as it went, but I had never been there myself. I had gone to Morocco when the French gave them independence, which they did in '55 or '56, while I was still there. They were working toward independence for Tunis and Morocco, and I felt they were trying to behave in pretty responsible way. I think the Embassy as a whole, in the early stages of the troubles in Algeria, was favorable to the French

government position, and felt that they should try to work out something, maybe not total independence, but some sort of association or something. We tried to support them, I made some sort of speech in '56 over there that the French took to be very supportive. The French press thought I was crushed pineapple or something, after that! I think it got more difficult in later years. There were some advantages after de Gaulle came in, because he was able to handle that. I don't remember if we ever sent anyone down to Algeria during the time I was there. We were pretty supportive of the French.

Q: Were there other major issues in the four years you were there,other than the ones we've discussed so far?

DILLON: No, I don't think so. One thing I did while I was in France which is probably of some interest: I made a real effort to visit different parts of France, and I found that they were very interested in receiving the American ambassador on an official, local basis. I thought it was very helpful, because you could prepare some sort of a speech which I did with the help of this girl who came to help me with my French. She also worked on speeches. The Embassy would help prepare a French speech, but no matter how good they were, they didn't know how to put it in really good French, and this girl did. She would do that, so that the speeches I delivered were more colloquial, more proper French than a translation from English to French. So they were quite good, and they worked very well. By doing that, in my four years I managed to visit and spend the night in some 65 of the 90 departments of France. I felt that you build up certain understanding and good will that way.

In one particular case, I remember going to visit southwest France, and we went to Toulouse and called on the former president, Auriol, and had a fine visit with him, and then went on Carcassonne, where we were received by and stayed with the prefect of that department. When we got there in the afternoon, he said: “Do you mind if they have a reception for you at the hotel de ville?” Since that was usual, I say, “Well, fine.” And then on the way, he said, “By the way, I think you ought to know the entire conseil municipal is

communist.” So, I was sort of scared. And he said, “Well, that won't make any difference, that's something else again, but they will be very glad to see you and very happy to see you.” It was one of the nicest visits I had. The conseil municipal thanked America for helping them during the war, because that was still the thinking of that in those days. We talked with them and had champagne the way they do and then departed. It was totally friendly, and that was the first time they had seen official Americans in God knows when. So, in that way, I think it is helpful to get around the country. It is one of the jobs that an ambassador can do, and I think— to get more up to date now— I think it's more important now, because ambassadors have less to do of the actual diplomatic work in the capital wherever that may be, because more of the diplomatic work is done in Washington or by special people that they put on jet planes and send over to do important jobs.

Q: There is one other issue, maybe, that's relevant to the time, and that's the origin of the Common Market. Did your office have anything to do with that, did you?

DILLON: Yes, we were strongly for that. That again was at the time of Mendes, and he agreed to go ahead with it, and of course that was, I think, also certainly one of the fallouts of turning down EDC and ending the war in Indochina in a way that didn't make us very happy. The French wanted to help in other ways they could, and they decided that the Common Market was an alternative. They already had the Coal and Steel Community. That had worked, and the Common Market was an alternative to the EDC. Joining it showed that they were good Europeans.

Q: Did you personally do anything to encourage them?

DILLON: Oh, yes, all the time. I met numerous times with Monnet on that. We didn't talk to him early about the EDC much, but did talk a great deal about the Common Market, and that sort of thing. Of course the lines were pretty well drawn. In the opposition were Gaullists and communists but they were alone and unless they could get some other support it would pass, and it did.

Q: What do you think was your most significant accomplishment aambassador?

DILLON: I think creating in France and in the French people—government people— a better understanding of the United States and of American policy, and in setting up a working relationship that was really quite effective and quite good. There's one minor thing that I wouldn't like to call a great occasion, but it was indicative of the fact that in those days the ambassador could do more things that he can now. We had for a long time wanted very badly to get permission to put atomic weapons in Morocco, and the French had to say yes, before we could go ahead. I wish I could remember exactly what it was that the French wanted, but I remember going over and seeing Maurice Schumann in his office at the Quai d'Orsay at his request. He had some request for us, which was something I knew we could do. So I said, “Fine, but how about you helping us out?” He said, “What's that?” and I said, “As you know, we'd like to get atomic bombs into our bases in Morocco.” He thought about it a minute of two. They must have talked about it before, because he said, “Okay.”I then went back to the Embassy and called General Norstad the Commander of NATO, and of our forces in Europe. I asked him “How quick can you do it?” and he said, “We can do it today.” I said, “Go ahead, you have French permission.” Since he was the NATO commander, he could do it in no time flat. I sent my report back to the State Department thinking I had made quite a coup, getting what we had wanted for so long. And would you believe it, they blew up all over —everywhere! They said I had no authority to do this, even though it was what they wanted! But it was sort of fun, to be able to accomplish something overnight. It did show that, if you were willing to, at that time an ambassador could do some things that would be inconceivable now.

Q: What was your greatest frustration as ambassador?

DILLON: I think that could be that we were continually having scraps of one sort or another with the Bureau of European Affairs. It wasn't really frustrations, it was a nuisance all the time. I was not frustrated by failing to get the EDC, because I felt that was unrealistic at the time to pin all our hopes on it. When it got turned down, it was terrible, but the end result

was getting EEC, the Common Market, and getting Germany into NATO. I'd say another frustration was when I felt so strongly that I came back to see the President about the oil embargo.

Q: Anything you would have done differently?

DILLON: I'd like to make clear that what we did in Paris was a team effort, and I had a very fine team, and we worked together. No one person accomplished this. If you have a good team, you have to work with it. I was glad to be able to, and the Foreign Service team seemed to like working with me.

Q: Would you recommend the Foreign Service career to someone in youfamily, or recommend it in general?

DILLON: At that time, which was the late '50s —all through the '50s— I would say, certainly, yes. Today things are a little different and I would hesitate to offer anything. One problem is the terrorist situation, which has totally changed the life of Foreign Service people in many parts of the world.

Q: Your had children with you when you were in France? How old weryour children?

DILLON: No, they were grown up. But I have a daughter who as married the first year I was there, the summer of '53. She had a child, and then came over there with the child; the grandchild was born in '54 and came to live with us in early '55, so she had a couple years with us.

Q: Let's talk now about your work in the Department of State. You told me before that the Secretary asked you to come back. Do you have any knowledge of how he selected you for that position?

DILLON: None whatsoever except he knew I had a financial and economic background. I think he himself had very little interest in economics, but I think he had come to the

conclusion that it was pretty important. It had been run by all sorts of other people outside the Department, and I think he'd been a little frustrated by that. It had been run by Harold Stassen for a while, and there was foreign aid, and then after that there waJohn Hollister. Hollister was very conservative, a fine fellow, but I think Dulles felt that he was attuned to working more closely with Secretary Humphrey in the Treasury than he was with the State Department, and he felt his Under Secretary, Secretary Hoover, was also that way. So my guess is he felt that economics and foreign aid, which is the biggest part of it, were important to foreign policy and that he wasn't getting what he should there. He wanted someone in the Department who he felt compatible with, who would run the economic side the way that he liked without bothering him (Dulles) with the details.

Q: How did you organize your office in Washington, to handle foreigaid?

DILLON: It was developed over a period of time. When I came back from France, the title was sort of pulled out of the air— Dulles created a “Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Affairs”, and that made me senior to the Assistant Secretary of Economic Affairs, who was a competent run of the mill fellow. He was good, but not much imagination. I luckily, in the early days, stumbled on a fellow who was very brilliant in the whole trade area. He had apparently run afoul of Herbert Hoover [Jr.], who didn't like him. He was very forthcoming about free trade and wasn't conservative enough for Hoover. His name was John Leddy, and he was later our ambassador to the OECD [Organization for economic Cooperation and Development]. He was really a great expert on trade, which in those days I didn't know too much about. He was very brilliant. He was a floater, because he had no real job. I got hold of him and worked with him, and took to him, so he became a special assistant to me. This all evolved bit by bit.

The foreign aid part was not part of my responsibility when I first got back. Secretary Dulles told me he wanted me to run it a little later. Hollister was still there, and he was at the cabinet level, so it didn't work for me to run it. Dulles knew Hollister was planning to leave in the summer. When Secretary Humphrey resigned from the Treasury, Hollister

also left very shortly thereafter. The ICA [International Cooperation Administration] job as they called it then, became open, and at the time Secretary Dulles said to me, “See if you can find someone to take that job, and he will report to you.” Before that the ICA director was supposed to report to the Secretary of State. Hollister had taken that very literally. He would report to Dulles in person, but to nobody else. Dulles didn't have time for it, and it just didn't work, obviously. So Dulles said, “This next one will report to the State Department through you.” So after the beginning of the fall of 1957, that was my responsibility. We did get a fellow by the name of James Smith, who came and ran the agency for a while. We did not have a big organization in State because, in running the foreign aid program we pretty well left the ICA alone to run it. We didn't try to second-guess them on little things, but just when we wanted something, we let them know. Also, we had military aid in State. We worked on that, and there were some different people who worked in the State Department at the time. There was a fellow by the name of Henry Owen, who later headed the foreign affairs side at Brookings, who was in the State Department at that time. We did a good deal of work with the Defense Department on military assistance, because that had nothing to do with the ICA.

There were trade problems, and they were constantly coming up with individual countries. I became sort of an expert on Latin America, because that was one of the big problems. I knew nothing about that when I arrived in the Department. I couldn't speak Spanish, but I was sent down in the early fall of '57 to a big economic conference in Buenos Aires. The head of the delegation was the new Secretary of the Treasury, who at that time had just been appointed, Robert Anderson, and he had no intention of staying down there for any length of time. He went down and made a speech on the opening day and then left. So the number two fellow was me, and so therefore, I became the head of the delegation for all the substantive work. It was a mixed delegation, from Treasury, the Congress, State, and everywhere else, and I learned an awful lot. I found out that Latin American resentments were very great and had been building up in the previous years, when economic policy had been run by Humphrey. He had a reason for his policy because, except for Brazil

at the end they hadn't been in the war. They profited out of the war and had done very well, but then, after the war, when things went back to normal, these immense war profits disappeared, and the fact that they were less developed countries became more clear. The population grew. They had problems, we were giving all this money everywhere else in the world except in Latin America. So we had to find a way to be more friendly. We opposed a Latin American development bank. They wanted to create such a bank, and we opposed it. They wanted an agreement on stabilizing prices of coffee, and we opposed it. We opposed everything. I finally worked down there with the Brazilians and the Mexicans, who were the two biggest countries, and told them we'd try and work something out. So they were helpful, and we finally got a communique which was sort of meaningless, but in which I said we would study some of these things which hadn't been studied before. So I went back to Washington and tried to change things and managed to.

We did establish the Inter American Bank, which was done a couple of year later, and we did make a coffee agreement, and, at the Bogota Conference in 1960, we started to give them some aid for what we called “social justice,” which was primarily to help their economies. That was the forerunner of the Alliance for Progress.

Yes, there's a very interesting story in my relations on that with Senator John F. Kennedy. We'd come up with this idea before the conference in Bogota of all the economic leaders and ministers of the hemisphere. We were looking to get something going, the then president of Brazil had a big proposal called Operation Pan-America, which was supposed to lift everybody up by their bootstraps, but the main lift was going to be billions of dollars from the United States, and we'd been scared of that. We decided, in the State Department, that we had to make another step, and I was able to convince President Eisenhower after a slight disagreement with the Treasury, that this was something which we should do.. He agreed to ask for $600 million for this “social justice” program, which I would put forth at this conference in Bogota.

Q: Did you meet personally with President Eisenhower about this?

DILLON: Oh, yes. I met personally with him quite a lot, because, to go back a little bit, after the first year when I was trying to run things, it became obvious that titles had a lot to do with how you operated in Washington. I couldn't even get my telephone calls properly answered as a Deputy Under Secretary of State. So I told Foster Dulles in the winter of 1957-58 that it wouldn't work, and why. He agreed, and went to the President, and the President agreed and said that he would ask for the creation of a new title of Under Secretary of State, so there would be two Under Secretaries: one would be the Under Secretary of State, and the other would be Under Secretary of State for either Economic affairs or Political affairs, whichever way it was decided to fill the position.. They did send up that legislation, and the legislation was passed. While it was being passed, Congress—the Senate, I guess—, put in it that I, by name, would be the first one to hold the job. So I never had to be confirmed. After that I was the number two Under Secretary in the whole Government, second only to Under Secretary Herter, my senior at State.

To get back to the fund for “social justice” in Latin America. After President Eisenhower came to the decision to let us do this, which was early in July, it took a while to get the legislation ready, and it didn't get to the Congress until August, which was after the nominating convention, and Senator Kennedy had meanwhile been nominated by the Democrats. I was informed that no legislation would be considered in the Senate during this last period before they adjourned for the elections, unless he approved of it. So I had to go up and see him.

Q: What law was this?

DILLON: This was the legislation to create the Social Justice program for Latin America. So I did go and see him. He had meanwhile come out in favor of what later became the Alliance for Progress. I don't know if he invented the name, he may have, but he obviously was preparing to make a big thing of his interest in Latin America, and here we were coming up with a similar program, to do something considerably more modest, but in the very same direction. So that was not very pleasing, obviously, to him politically. It took

some of the credit for the idea away from him. But he was very good when I spoke to him, and he said he recognized the problem— there was this conference. We had to have something. Okay.— we made a compromise. He said he would approve and work for passage of the law authorizing this program provided we did not ask for any appropriation until the following year. An appropriation would be made the following year so, if he was elected President, he could take the credit for the appropriation and could make the figure whatever he wanted. So that was fine, and that was my first business connection with Senator Kennedy. He'd been on the Foreign Relations Committee. He'd not been a regular attender, though, because he'd been running for President, I guess.

You asked, did I see President Eisenhower and I said “yes”. Mr. Dulles was not interested in the details of economic policy, after he'd handed this over to me, particularly the foreign aid part. I was authorized by him and by the President to deal directly with the President when that was necessary. It was necessary fairly often, because Treasury Secretary Humphrey had developed the habit of second-guessing every telegram the State Department sent out that had anything to do with money. Various aid programs would often be in disagreement with Treasury, even minor ones. Usually I could settle these with Secretary Anderson who was far easier to deal with and more understanding of foreign policy then George Humphrey. Nevertheless, we quite often had differences that had to go to the President for resolution. The would mean that Secretary Anderson for the Treasury and me for the State Department would have to meet with the President. So I saw President Eisenhower a good deal and, because of my aid responsibilities, I was allowed to go both to Cabinet meetings and National Security Council meetings, as soon as I became Under Secretary for Economic Affairs in the early summer of 1958.

Q: How many people would meet at the National Security Councimeeting?

DILLON: I'd say there were probably about 20.

Q: Most recent historical work on the Eisenhower administration indicates that he really didn't like to use the NSC; that the meetings were too big and that he preferred to do things privately with either of the Dulles brothers.

DILLON: Well, I think that was true with big things, for the same reason that President Kennedy and others, later, diminished the National Security apparatus or their use of it. Eisenhower, for some reason, had set up these weekly NSC meetings; there had to be a meeting every week whether there was something to talk about or not, so they sort of had to make do with different things. But the big advantage of the system was that every Department that had an interest in a question before the NSC had an opportunity to study and comment on it. The National Security Council under Eisenhower was very good, because there was a setup where nothing reached the Council that hadn't gone through a subsidiary group that was chaired by the Under Secretary of State and had the Deputy Secretary of Defense and other interested Under Secretaries as members. Then when something was decided by the National Security Council it passed to a different group, which was called the Operation Coordination Board [OCB] for implementation. It was up to the Under Secretary of State, as Chairman of the OCB to see that it was carried out. So while it was cumbersome for the President, having all these meetings, the system worked.

I am fully convinced that it was President Kennedy's action in demolishing that system, and not having had time to build up an adequately good communications network to take its place, that caused the Bay of Pigs, which happened three and a half months after he came into office. There wasn't much time to create new and effective means of communications. So the Security Council was good in its way, and I had a very unusual relationship for someone who was not a cabinet officer with the President of the United States. After Herter became Secretary, I become the Under Secretary, the number-two fellow in the State Department. I maintained my same responsibilities in running economic policy and the number-three fellow became the Under Secretary for Political Affairs. I

was in addition to that, the general officer in charge of the Department in the Secretary's absence, which was quite frequent, so I saw the President even more.

Q: Why don't we talk a bit now about Christian Herter. What was ilike working with him?

DILLON: He was a great fellow, and he had a great feel for the Foreign Service, as I did. We just were very good friends and got along very well. I had great respect for him. He knew very little about the economic side, so that was totally mine, and, if there was ever any row with other Departments, he'd back me up. He was fine. He had some health problems— he needed to rest a little more— he had severe arthritis. It didn't affect his abilities in any way, but there were times when he'd have to take a week off— maybe a little more than that— to rest. In those days, when the Secretary of State wasn't in Washington, the Under Secretary as Acting Secretary really acted, which I don't think is the case anymore. Today they call up on a single side band and say “What should we do?” to the Secretary who may be in Thailand or wherever. But in those days, they didn't do this. When the Secretary went off on a trip, he concentrated on the trip and let the Under Secretary in his capacity as Acting Secretary, run the Department.

Q: What were the principal things that you did as Acting Secretary?

DILLON: Well, I just had to run the Department.

Q: I mean, what were the major issues that came up?

DILLON: It never was a long period. It was a week here, and then four days there, and a week there and so forth, but it was more of a joint thing. The one great exciting time that came up, of course, while I was Acting Secretary, which was nothing to cover us or the United States government with glory, was the U2 incident.

Q: Yes.

DILLON: That's very interesting— I just learned some additional information about it the other day, which deals with the element that we had never understood. Secretary Herter was off in Turkey at the time at a NATO meeting. This U2 mission has been approved, as always, by the President. Approvals went through a very restricted group, which included those at the Under Secretary level and the Secretary of State, so I was aware of the timing of this thing. They'd wanted to fly in early April. They felt it was important to try and find out where the Russians were putting their ICBMs, which they were beginning to have. We thought they had more than they actually did have. In winter, with the cloud cover, you couldn't fly these missions. You couldn't see anything, so it was getting to be, hopefully, better weather. The CIA felt if they could get one more mission done, it would fly over where they thought these missiles were. The weather kept getting bad and the mission kept being postponed.

Finally, it was the very last day the President had set. “We can't go beyond this. If we can't fly by this day, that's the end.” That's the day it flew. Herter was gone to NATO meeting in Turkey. We were having a drill, on a Thursday morning, I guess. That's when the NSC meetings usually were. We were having a drill in some place they called “the mountain”, I think it was, which was a protected place where the President and various people could go if there was an atomic attack. In those days it was still thought you could get away from it. It was somewhere out in the Blue Ridge there, in Virginia. We all were flown out by helicopter, and had the meeting of the NSC out there. On the phone we got news there, that the plane was missing and presumed downed. We had been following the plane by radar. We knew where it was, and knew that it had gone down. It had just started to circle and lose altitude, and finally disappeared. So we didn't know what to do.

The President told me to work with Allen Dulles. We were to get together after the NSC meeting. We had to put out some sort of announcement. We didn't get back until eleven-thirty or so to our offices. The President had said that nobody but the State Department was to speak on this issue. I was working on developing a statement with Allen Dulles on

the telephone when suddenly Linc White, the press relations man at the State Department, came into my room and handed me a piece of paper, which was a ticker tape which said NASA had just announced that some plane had been lost, down off Turkey— a plane which had gotten lost and had apparently gone down. We didn't like this at all because it was a cover story that had been “canned” way ahead, and it was obviously way wrong, because we knew the damn thing had gone down near Smolensk in Central Russia, 1000 miles or more from the area mentioned by NASA.

We couldn't understand how this had happened, but we had to get ourselves out of it. We just put out a very difficult sort of statement. I don't recall all the details. But you couldn't say it was some mistake by the White House, because you never say the “White House” makes a mistake. I always thought it was Hagerty who was responsible. Because, when the President left “the mountain” he had told Andy Goodpaster, who was with him that day and who was going back to the White House to tell everyone that State and only State would handle all publicity on this!

I thought Hagerty has just overridden Goodpaster, which he was capable of doing. I happened to see Goodpaster just the other day and asked him. I said this was something I had never understood about the U2 reporting and should have asked him what happened at that time. He said “It was terrible.” He sai“I got back to the White House and told Hagerty what the President had said, and he said we had to follow the cover story and send the reporters over to NASA— send all inquiries over to NASA.

Of course, the second they got to NASA, they'd be given this phony canned cover story. Goodpaster went to see the President with Hagerty, and for some reason, the President changed his mind and agreed with Hagerty. Hagerty explained why it had be or something, and the President said “Okay.— Go ahead.” And neither I nor Allen Dulles was ever told of this decision.

So that's what happened. We got our legs sawed off and it made us look very foolish. I'm sure the President didn't realize what problems the cover story would make but that's apparently what happened. So we had to go on from there, and Herter came back, and we were still trying to persuade the President not to take responsibility for the U2. Dulles offered to resign and say it was his responsibility. That's usually the way spy things were done in the world, and there was a summit meeting coming up in Paris. Hagerty persuaded the President that he couldn't allow Allen Dulles to take all the blame, because it would look like the President didn't know what was going on in the government. There had been a lot of attacks about that time saying he didn't know what was going on but, of course, that was wrong, because he did know and did get involved. So he was convinced by the Hagerty argument that he should accept the blame, contrary to the advice of the State Department and everybody else. So finally that's what blew up the Paris conference. The Russians couldn't accept this— they apparently had been prepared to forget about this, agreeing to go on, if the President had said “It's terrible: I'm sorry. I didn't know.”

Q: Books on the subject would say that when the first announcement came from the Soviets that the plane had been shot down, everyone in Washington assumed that Powers had killed himself.

DILLON: We didn't assume at all, but we knew he was supposed to. He had some sort of things— a pill or pin, something to stick yourself with— that would end you quickly and peacefully.

Q: It was even also assumed that the plane could be destroyed.

DILLON: Demolished! Yes, that's the other thing— we had to believe both those things. We didn't assume it. We probably thought the chances were less than even that he was alive, and if he was alive, he wouldn't be in good enough shape to so much talking.

Q: Do you think there was anything that Eisenhower could or shoulhave done differently to preserve the summit in Paris?

DILLON: Well, if he hadn't accepted the blame himself, personally, it might have made quite a difference. How much, I don't know. It's hard to tell. There were those, and they were numerous, who said that Foster Dulles had always run foreign affairs. That's not true. I have many personal experiences on that. Eisenhower was always in full charge. In this case he probably didn't realize that it would blow the summit when he accepted responsibility although that was the advice he'd gotten from the State Department.

Q: Let's go back a little bit about U.S.-French relations. Charles de Gaulle returned to power in 1958. Did you have anything to do with advising the President about how that would characterize American-French relations?

DILLON: Yes, because Eisenhower never liked him very much during the war. He'd been a nuisance to Eisenhower, and a nuisance to Roosevelt. Eisenhower had a memory of him as a difficult fellow, but we were perfectly ready to work with him. There were some great advantages, because, almost immediately, he made clear that he was going to settle the Algerian situation and all the other colonial problems of France, which was very good. But the problem arose— I can't remember exact dates, but not very long after, no more than the next year— that he proposed the idea of a Triumvirate: France, England and the United States were going to run the world. It would be sort of a private triumvirate. He believed we had a special relationship with England. At the beginning he just wanted to be part of that. We knew in the State Department that that just wouldn't work. You just don't have a triumvirate, and there wasn't any duumvirate, even though the British often talked of a special relationship. We were very friendly with the British but the effects were exaggerated. We were friendly with them, but we certainly didn't try to run things with them. So we turned de Gaulle down, and that was the end. As soon as we did that, he said “Okay, I'll show you.” And he proceeded to do so; he pulled out of the NATO command to keep us out of France. There could be no American bases in France, and so forth. But that

was his reaction. He was either going to be part of the group that ran the world, or he was going to be by himself.

Q: Did you personally have a view of what would happen when dGaulle became President in '58?

DILLON: I didn't think he'd ask for this triumvirate, but I was convinced when I came back —that was one of the things I reported— that the Fourth Republic was very shaky and the chances were that there'd be trouble and some sort of an upheaval which would change the Constitution and the electoral system so they'd have a different kind of government in France. So when De Gaulle came back, it wasn't exactly the way I thought it was going to be, but it didn't surprise me. That was when they came out with the Fifth Republic, which was quite different from the regime at the time of my stay in Paris.

Q: Probably the last important issue in those days for the future was U.S. relations with Vietnam. In the public record— the documents have now been published— there's evidence of you— as Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, being interested in what use was made of the economic aid from the United States to Vietnam. Do you recall anything about that in 1959-60?

DILLON: Not really in detail. We were always interested because substantial amounts were going. We were always interested. It was big, and we wanted it to be run well, because if not, it would be lost. So it fits in with the sort of thing we would have been worried about. I do remember all the talk about that at that time, but I don't remember being particularly personally involved in it.

The personal things I remember were all these various South American things. I sort of became Under Secretary for South American/Latin American relations as well as other things, because of these important economic problems.

Also, there's one thing that I always credit myself with as something I think I accomplished. It wasn't really my idea. It originated with John Leddy. That was to integrate Japan into the economic world of the West. I started— probably in '58 or early '59— trying to do that, and the means that we were going to use was to get Japan into the OEC [Organization for Economic Cooperation], so we worked out a program of changing the OEC to be the OECD— Economic Cooperation and Development— and having a longer reach to bring Japan in. We had arguments with some of the Europeans, because they didn't want someone else in with them. It was a good time before they agreed. I had the pleasure of going to Paris, one of the last things I did, in December of 1960 and signing the treaty establishing the OECD which included the Japanese on a regular basis in the economic discussion of the West. It's hard to conceive now, but there was a day when they weren't included.

Q: What do you rank as your greatest success in the State Departmenin those four years?

DILLON: Well, I think, probably, just running foreign aid and preventing it from being demolished. I think, also, Latin America—changing the thrust of policy toward Latin America so we were more sympathetic, which easily turned into the Alliance for Progress. With President Kennedy, it was carried much further. I think that was important and I think the other important thing was including Japan on a regular basis in conversations on economic matters of the West as an equal, as a member of the OECD.

Q: What was the most frustrating thing about the years in thDepartment?

DILLON: Undoubtedly, the U2. I remember I had the worst time going up and having to testify before the Senate committee about that, not being able to explain in detail what happened

Q: When did you testify? Oh, you mean before, while the flightwere going on?

DILLON: No, afterwards, to answer questions as to what happened.

Q: Oh, afterwards.

DILLON: I had to explain why this silly announcement was put out by NASA, how it all happened, and I felt I could not mention the White House role.

Q: Who gave you a hard time?

DILLON: Well, I don't remember any particular Senator. It was just the basic situation where I could not even mention the central role played by the White House staff and had to take it all on ourselves at State. On another occasion I had a quite wonderful time with Long.

Q: This is Russell Long?

DILLON: Russell Long. When the President decided to appoint Herter as Secretary, and me as Under Secretary, I had to be confirmed in the job, because that was another job. We thought that would be just a formality, no problem at all. Long, who at that time was on the Foreign Relation Committee, asked me all sorts of questions, because he disagreed with my policies regarding foreign aid, and, in particular, with the use of local currencies. He said he would have approved my nomination as Secretary of State but could not agree to me as Under Secretary where I would run foreign aid. He had a difficult time understanding why local currencies weren't just the same as dollars. He took Greece as the example, where we had billions of drachmas in Greece under the PL-480 program: the grain that we sold in Greece which they paid for by making a book entry that we had so many drachmas. So when we'd come up with a financial aid request for Greece, he would say, “Why don't you use all this money you've got?” We said, “You can't just buy a printing press and start to print this stuff, it wouldn't be worth anything.” Well, that was hard for him to understand, and he said, “What you want to do is stand up on top of the Acropolis and throw dollars to the wind” Anyway, he wouldn't let my nomination out of the committee for

about two or three months. Finally, it was Senator Johnson, who persuaded him to allow it to come to a vote in the Committee, and I was approved by 20 to one.

Q: He voted against it?

DILLON: Yes, and then on the floor I was approved by 97 to one! Sthat was the end of that.

Q: Did you ever have anything to do with Russell Long after thawhile you were Secretary of the Treasury?

DILLON: Yes. That's the funny thing, because when I became Secretary, I decided— I had a friend who was a lawyer, who was a Democrat, a very conservative, but good Democrat, named Joe Fowler. President Kennedy said I could pick my own team there, as long as he approved of it. I suggested Fowler and he said fine, so, I got Joe as my Under Secretary. He knew all the Democrats, and the people on the Hill had known him as director of mobilization in the Korean War. I went in and told Joe, “I've had trouble with Russell Long — I'd like your help. I'd like to meet him and see if we can be friendly.” And he said, “I think that's a good idea.” So he arranged for me to have breakfast alone with Russell Long one day. He asked me to come to his apartment, and he cooked some scrambled eggs and gave them to me and sat down. It was a little frigid. Finally, I said to him, “Senator, I think there's something I'd like to tell you. I think you might be interested in it.” He said, “What's that?:”, and I said, “Well, I remember when I was a young man, just out of college, just starting to work, my father downtown had met your father Senator Huey Long. My father was the banker for some power company in Arkansas, and through that had met your father. Your father apparently wanted to meet some people in New York. I remember my father arranged a lunch. Senator Huey Long came up, and my father had this lunch for him at which he met the presidents of some banks, and different people of that sort.” Russell dropped his fork and stared at me in amazement. After a moment he said, “Your pappy did that for my pappy, and I did that to you?! That's the worst thing that ever happened—

I'm ashamed of myself!" From then on, we were good friends. We worked together very closely. So that was the end of that.

Q: Well, any final thoughts on the State Department years or youcareer in diplomacy, overall?

DILLON: No, I think we've covered everything.

Q: Well, maybe there's one question I could ask you about your years as Under Secretary that's parallel to what I asked about your career as ambassador. Is there anything you'd have done differently as Under Secretary?

DILLON: No, I think it worked out pretty well. One of the things I learned or felt was there was too much detailed interference from the Treasury with the operations of the State Department in economic areas. I didn't think this was needed or necessary. When I found myself, to my surprise, in the Treasury Department, I took with me, as Assistant Secretary for International Affairs of the Treasury Department, John Leddy, who had worked with me as my special assistant in the State Department. We changed the situation very drastically. There was plenty for the Treasury to do with its own business on international monetary problems and things of that sort. When in a later stage in the Kennedy administration, the State Department in the person of George Ball, tried to insert themselves into our area we resisted, and the President upheld us. But I got the Treasury Department out of the State Department's hair, so at least it could run and do its own business with greater ease. I do think that it's important— it's difficult, but the government runs much better if there's a personal relationship between people who are at the top of the departments in which they play down this inevitable sort of fighting for turf that's apt to take place otherwise. We had very close relations while I was at State. with the Defense Department. I was a very close friend with Secretary Gates, who was the final Secretary of Defense under Eisenhower. He was Deputy Secretary before that. We never had any arguments— that is big arguments

with the Defense Department, which is quite different from the way it seems to be now. State ran foreign policy and Defense did what they had to back it up.

Q: Is there anything you tried to do as Under Secretary, building on your experience in France, that made the Western European Bureau have a different view from the Embassy? Did you try to solve those sorts of frictions?

DILLON: Well, I think that my position in the State Department reinforced Secretary Dulles'. Also Herter, who tended to like France, helped when he became Under Secretary. The anti-French feeling was still there, because the same people were there but I think it was much less active when we were there. However, the arrival of General de Gaulle as President of France, did not make things easier.

One thing that I think is true about ambassadors, is that there is a time limit on how long an ambassador can function well in a given country. I have a feeling that a four-year term is about right. I asked my British colleague, who I got to know quite well in Paris, what their policy was, and he said their policy was a limit of about five years. After that problems would arise. The Department at home would tend to think, whether is was true or not, and it may be true to some extent, that the ambassador had become more of a representative of the country to which he was accredited rather than the other way around, and tensions would automatically build up.

The French seem to handle this problem in quite a different way. They keep their ambassadors for indefinite periods, sometimes much, much longer, but they make them come home every year for at least two months. One month on vacation and one month in the Quai d'Orsay, where supposedly they get re-oriented back to be 100% Frenchmen; that would, maybe, be an alternative. I do think that the tensions were a little exaggerated when I was in Paris. But I think it is a natural state of affairs, that after a certain period of time, there comes a tension between the ambassador and the embassy staff on the

one hand and the Department on the other, and this is increased when there is an activist ambassador such as I was.

Q: While you were ambassador, how often and for how long did yocome back?

DILLON: I never came back.

Q: So you were there four years.

DILLON: I came back once for a few days to see Eisenhower after Suez and came back one other time— two other times— both of which were because I had to have rather major operations, that kept me out for a couple of months, but not for vacations; I never came back for a vacation; I never came back to Washington just to check in.

Q: And was that customary?

DILLON: Well, yes; rather, some other ambassadors came back for vacations, and if they came back for vacations, they would generally check in with Washington out of politeness for a day or two. But there as no standard thing that they should check in. It wasn't encouraged.

Q: We spoke before about when you traveled around the 60 departments of France - 60 of the 90 - did you travel outside of France, to other French territories?

DILLON: Only to Tunis and Morocco. Those were the two places where we went, in each case right after the liberation, when they became independent.

Q: Well, do you have anything to add that we haven'covered?

DILLON: No, I think that's done pretty well. All I can say is that I've had a very enjoyable time, both in the Embassy and the State Department. I found the Embassy extraordinarily interesting, but I think four years was enough, both for the reason I told you and also

because of the representational character of the job, where you have to make the same Fourth of July speech every year, and a certain number of other speeches, 10 or 12 of them, and they're all the same every year. You finally get a little tired of them. Four years, I think, is long enough. I also have a similar feeling with Washington for a very different reason: four years - maybe five - is enough for everyone who holds very top jobs that require dealing with the Congress and the media. If you have at all an active relation with the Congress, there's bound to be a building up of difficulties because of the adversarial relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of government. Trouble is bound to develop between the head of the Department and at least some members of the committee that oversees the affairs of the Department. I don't recall details, but I know it just became more difficult. I had charge of foreign aid, and I had to deal with Mr. Passman in the House and with Senator Ellender in the Senate. It was a constant battle. After four years, I'd had it. I didn't want to lose my temper at them, but it was hard not to tell them what I thought of them, which wouldn't have done any good. The same way in the Treasury— there were a couple of Senators that I couldn't get along with. For the first few years, fine, but then trouble arose. I've noticed that some have gone beyond this time period during the Kennedy/Johnson administrations, Secretaries McNamara and Rusk. McNamara got sort of eaten alive before the end of the second term. He was a very good fellow, but it was just that he'd been there too long. Dean Rusk got through, but he was totally exhausted by the end, and not effective because of this.

Q: Of course, the war.

DILLON: That made it much harder.

Q: But it does seem to be a pattern, with Kissinger in his last twyears.

DILLON: The same thing.

Q: He had brutal fights with Congress.

DILLON: You came in with a honeymoon, and then you learn that that gets over in a year, and they respect you after that, but after about four years, it's very difficult.

Q: Haig never had a honeymoon with Congress. Shultz has goorelations with Congress.

DILLON: Well, he wasn't in the top job too long; he will have been there maybe six years, so he's just getting by. I have a very real feeling that its not wise to stay much longer than four years in any one of the top jobs. I was fortunate to have gotten out in time, because in both of the jobs that I left, I got out of without a big row. It was a good way to end.

Q: Thank you very much.

DILLON: Thank you. It's very nice to talk with you.

End of interview